

In The Secret Service

Revelations of Mme. Dumaresq, Detective, by Derek Vane.

VIII.
Al Chindus, the Priest—A
Supernatural Experi-
ence.

HAVE only had one supernatural experience in my life, but that was a terrible one, which I am never likely to forget. It came about in this way.

I went on political business to Cairo with orders to obtain, at any cost, the embalmed body of Al Chindus, a priest of ancient Egypt. Some papers of the greatest importance had been deposited in his sarcophagus by a powerful official, who had given us a great deal of trouble. After considerable difficulty the sarcophagus was handed over to me. Nothing had been said about the documents it contained. I was left to discover them for myself—if I could. No doubt the hiding place had been considered a perfectly safe one at the time and it was only by chance that we had heard of it.

I had hoped to have found the papers in some receptacle in the walls of the sarcophagus, but after a close search I could discover nothing from the outside. I must open the coffin. With great difficulty I at length succeeded in raising the lid. I removed the wrappings with reverent hands, but as the form within was revealed I started back with a hoarse cry.

Dead! This man dead? Why, it was as though he slept! I touched the flesh fearfully; it was soft as the flesh of a living creature, and had the look and color of life. Never had I realized that a body could be preserved in so marvelous a manner. On a closer examination I found that, unlike most of the Egyptian mummies, the body had not been disfigured in any way. It was intact, as it had been in life.

I was alone, with the exception of servants, in a little house on the borders of the desert, and it was late at night. Darkness and mystery seemed to wrap me round, and I felt an unusual sensation of fear and trembling expectation. I would have rushed away from it all if I could, but it was too late. I must go through with it now.

Nerving myself to the effort, I searched for the papers, and drew forth at last, not only the modern documents of which I was in search, and which had evidently been slipped just under the lid, but an ancient papyrus as well that lay under the dead man's hand, and which I examined eagerly. It was written in bold hieratic writing, and was of considerable length, but I had not time then to read more than the first few paragraphs.

"It is a matter of established faith with us that an undecaying body will be re-animated after 3,000 years. I am going to put the bodies to the test in my own person, therefore my body will not be embalmed after the ordinary manner of the Egyptians."

I had read thus far when my attention was attracted to his hieratic legends painted on the coffin, which set forth that Al Chindus was a learned and noble Egyptian priest, and giving the date of his death with other particulars. I made a rapid calculation, and discovered that this might would complete the 3,000 years since he had died! I started back in a sudden access of fear and horror, but the next moment I was ready to despise myself for being moved by such an old superstition. The day of miracles was

over. Who had ever heard of such a thing coming to pass? I was unnerved by my strange surroundings; the mysterious atmosphere of this old land had affected me and made me, for a moment, think all things possible. I must remember that nowadays we believe in nothing that we cannot understand.

I looked again at the recumbent figure, lying in solemn state. This man had been a power in the land in his day, and even death could not rob him of his dignity. The Egyptian priests were divided into four classes, and Al Chindus must have belonged to the Nowto, for he still wore the sign of his order—the flat ring or plate of gold.

My traveling clock chimed the hour of midnight, and, as the last blow fell, a quiver passed over the motionless form before me and slowly—slowly the eyelids were raised. I met the full gaze of his eyes and stopped short, as though a hand had pressed me back, trembling with a sudden, unknown fear.

For an instant I tried to meet those awful eyes, while the blood grew cold round my heart and my breath came in heavy gasps between the pearly lips, as though I had been running hard. Then, unable to bear that terrible look, I sank to the floor with a low moan and covered my face with my hands.

All that I had heard and read of the power of the "Evil Eye" was now brought home to me for the first time. I realized that a glance may strike like a blow, may penetrate to the heart of one's being like a virulent poison, robbing one of all strength to resist. I grew sick with fear, I who was no tyro in the world of evil, and trembled like a child. Al Chindus had the fatal "double pupil," which from time immemorial has been recognized as giving a baleful power to the eye, and in his life he must have cultivated this power until it had become a deadly weapon, bringing death and disaster where it fell. It was the essence of evil and could strike with more fatal effect than any weapon made by man. A weaker nature than mine would have hopelessly succumbed, but I was protected to a certain extent by the life I had led.

Presently a voice sounded in the silence, a voice that seemed to come from my own lips, and yet whose every tone was unfamiliar to me, and it spoke of things of which I knew naught.

"I have become a power in the land, all the more powerful because secret. Few see in me anything more than Al Chindus, the Priest, who is devoted to the service of the gods and rarely ventures out into the world. But the king consults me on every occasion, and my knowledge grows day by day. The spirit that I hold at my command is as wise as it is dangerous; but I can control it and why should I fear? Without its aid I could have achieved little. But it grows too eager for reward. These constant sacrifices will attract attention in time and may, besides, give a strength greater than I could desire."

"I thought myself proof against all human emotions except ambition, and yet the sight of Nephthys is beginning to trouble me. When I serve in the Temple, when, alone at night, I make my experiments; when, weary and exhausted, I throw myself down on my bed, her face comes between me and my devotions, between me and my art, between me and my rest. It is always before me, that

sweet, pure face, with the deep dark eyes—like black pools on which the sun shines—and hair the color of night. Her hands are slender and white as marble, and her hearing is that of a daughter of the gods.

"Nephthys grows dearer to me and dearer. I no longer try to oust her from my thoughts; I know it is useless. Why should she not become my wife? Though I hold that celibacy is advisable for the priesthood because it gives greater distinction and authority. It is not imperative, and I have risen so high that I can afford to follow my own inclinations. The law does not limit the number of wives a man may take to himself, except in the case of a priesthood; a priest may have one wife. Well! I do not desire more than Nephthys; she alone can satisfy my heart. But will she? Such advances as I have made have scarcely been warmly received. It may be that my manner chills her, that my face is more calculated to inspire fear than love. I would thought so little of women hitherto, I know so little of their ways. They have never appeared to me in any other light than as a necessary but lower part of the creation. Now, I would that I understood them better, that I might find my way to the heart of one. For the desire of Nephthys is like a thorn in my flesh, like a flame that bids me to consume me."

"I have been more accustomed to command than to implore, and I know none of the tricks that please a woman. When I look at that dark visage and the eyes before which men shrink away and hide their faces, I am surprised that Nephthys should avoid me, should shrink from my glance—though its evil is veiled for her—as a flower before a hot wind. But though I would it were otherwise, though I would fain have won her love, I can do without it. But I cannot do without her. She must be mine at all costs; life is no longer worth living out of the light of her eyes."

"I have discovered that another man has robbed me of my heart's desire, a man almost as highly placed and powerful as I am, Amasis, one of the king's musicians. He is the last man I could have desired as my rival, because, though I hate, I cannot despise him. Though he is wise in all the hidden ways of nature, he affects to work for good rather than evil; he will have no dealings with the powers of darkness, except to frustrate their designs. More than once his will has met mine, and the victory has not always remained with me. He is of a noble presence, and a favorite with both king and people. As the gods have chosen to set him against me, it shall be a battle to the death; I will sweep him out of my path once and forever. The unseen powers shall help me; I will do and promise anything to get him into my hands. He is the only man who has ever defied me, he has been my enemy and set my plans at naught more than once. Now he has done me this last wrong for which there is no pardon."

"They have played me a trick. Nephthys has secretly become the wife of Amasis, and I have lost her forever. I sit gnashing my teeth, consumed with rage and hate, wondering how I shall avenge myself. Revenge is all that remains to me now, and it must be as deep and bitter as my wrath."

I cannot strike Amasis except through the woman he loves, but that is the surest way—life will suffer ten times as much in her sufferings as he would in his own. And she is not out of my reach; she is too frail to resist my will. She is jealously guarded, but I can wait, and to the watcher who has patience the opportunity never fails to come. Let me find her alone, and I will have such a revenge as never mar before."

"The whole plan lies clearly before me. It seems quite simple; there should be no danger. In the temple my authority is absolute, I can come and go as I please, I do as I like. No man can say 'who is inside if I close the doors. I am to meet Nephthys in a lonely place where she cannot summon assistance, and where no one shall witness our interview. I have a specious tale ready that will bring her in the face and exert the whole force of my will and she will fall at my feet, as though snatched by a pestilence. A trusty helper will be at hand who will convey her, unseen, to the temple, and all difficulty will be over."

"I shall have had my revenge both on her and Amasis; I shall be a benefactor worthy even of me. She shall serve the gods in the desert; never again shall she hold communion with her fellows. She shall be as one already dead; the death in life shall be hers. The terror and grief of Amasis when she disappears forever leaving no trace behind her—when he searches day after day for some sign of his beloved—will be mine. I shall see him withering and baffled at every step, will be a long-drawn-out agony, sufficient to break the heart and spirit of the strongest. I shall see him withering away before my eyes. Ah! It is an evil day for the man or beast who ventures to cross the path of Al Chindus."

"And I will sweep him out of my path, against which any man less wise than I would have been on his guard. For some time the voice did not speak, and when it was heard again it sounded strangely faint and exhausted. "I am dying," it whispered, "dying slowly but surely; all my power cannot avail me. I met Nephthys face to face, I sent forth my will to snare her, but it was met by a stronger—the will of Amasis—and the evil that should have struck her has fallen back on myself. It had to find a victim, it was deadly enough to kill, and failing to reach her for whom it was intended—for the power of Amasis compassed her round like a shield—it has recoiled on me—I must die."

"Is good, then, stronger than evil? Or is it only that Amasis has attained to a greater power than I?"

"I make all preparations for death. My body will be embalmed after the manner of the great adepts among the Phenicians, and rarely practiced even by them on account of the cost and

labor. I shall lie in the state that befits my rank and greatness, I neither pine nor struggle; I know it would be useless, and yet I cannot think that the mighty spirit that has dwelt in me—which has never known fear, which has bowed the heads of men as the corn is bowed by the wind—can have finished forever with its human habitation, which has been cut down while in its full maturity."

"But I need speculate no longer; my doubts and wonder will all be made clear soon. I have shut myself up in the Temple. I would not that Amasis or Nephthys should have occasion to triumph over me, should know that I have fallen into my own trap, should see the mighty Al Chindus brought as low as the meanest slave. I will die, as I have lived—alone."

The voice ceased. But for a long time I did not raise my head. It was as though I lay in a trance; I was oblivious of my surroundings, everything seemed strange and unreal. At last I looked up, slowly and steadily, and my first glance was for Al Chindus. I drew a deep breath of amazement and relief. The eyes I dreaded to meet were closed, there was not a sign of life in the marble face. The limbs lay extended in all the rigidity of death, and a sense of dignity and power pervaded the silent form, telling, even after 3,000 years, that this had been no common clay.

Had I been dreaming, and had the dead man's voice spoken to me in my dreams, showing me his life and the evil he had done? Had he been driven to confession, though he was incapable of repentance? Or was his personality so strong that in some mysterious way it had impressed itself on me—the first to look on his face when the coffin-lid was raised after that ancient tragedy—and I could read his secret thoughts and speak them aloud, as though I were reading from a book?

Or was the old tradition a truth, and had life really come back and died out again while I cowered helpless and afraid? Was it he who had spoken, the man who had been dead 3,000 years, and had death sealed his lips again when he had confessed his misdeeds?

I could not tell. I could only ask and ask, and there was no one to answer. For Al Chindus never moved nor spoke or betrayed the slightest sign of animation, even when I ventured closer to study his wonderful face. If, indeed, the spirit had returned to that quiet figure, it was gone again forever. I did not speak of what had passed between him and me; it was too strange a story to tell. Who would have listened to it with believing ears? Even to myself I could only say that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.

However the mystery might be explained, one thing I knew—I had learnt the true history of Al Chindus, the Priest. It was like a handwriting on the wall, which comes and goes in a flash, leaving no trace, but whose truth and reality are never called in question.

(Copyright, 1905, by D. T. Pierce.)

King of
All
Bread.



Absolutely
Pure
And
Wholesome.

ALL GROCERS
SELL IT.

OUR CROWN
LABEL
ON EVERY LOAF



IF ALL YOU WHO ARE IN NEED OF A SPECIALIST WILL CALL ON ME FIRST, YOU WILL NOT HAVE SO MANY DOCTOR BILLS TO PAY.

DR. C. W. HIGGINS,

The oldest and most reliable specialist on chronic and private diseases. Thirty-two years in Salt Lake City. Microscopic and Analytic Physician. CURES Fits, Nervous Weakness, Neuralgia, Varicocle, Weak Spine, Biliousness, Gravel, Sore Eyes, Lung Diseases, Tape Worm, Dyspepsia, Liver and Kidney Complaints, Deafness, Catarrh, Erysipelas, Old Sores, Scrofula, Rheumatism, Stiff Joints, Piles in their worst form. Those afflicted with Epilepsy or Fits can be permanently cured.

Cor. Main and Third South Sts., St. Elmo Hotel.

Monday Special.
Curtain Poles.
All 5-ft. Curtain Poles, in mahogany, oak and cherry, for Monday only at the above price. **5c**

A nice Plate Rack would decorate the dining room for this Thanksgiving. We have a beautiful line in Golden Oak and Weathered Oak. Prices all the way from 35c up.

LUCILE.
Dinner sets and all pieces in china. Our assortment is very large and we can please you. Dinner Sets from—
\$5.50 Up

Solid Oak, quarter sawed, full box seat Dining Chair, highly polished—
\$2.50

We have many other things that will interest you, such as Carving Sets, Silverware, Roasting Pans—in fact, everything pertaining to the house.

Large, massive Table, solid oak and highly polished, 42x42-inch top, 5-inch massive legs; a beautiful Table for the money. Price—
\$20.00

Chase Leather Couch, Karpen's guaranteed springs, nicely buffed, size 30x76 inches long. Price—
\$20.00

Handsome China Closet, 39 inches wide by 64 inches high; beautifully finished. Price—
\$25.00

Thanksgiving will soon be here and to make your home look more cheerful we are offering some special values, which you will find to your interest, and we will be pleased to show you through our large stock of other goods.

"GUNN" SECTIONAL BOOKCASES
"YOU DON'T GET DONE WHEN YOU BUY A GUNN"
We sell the famous Gunn Book Cases and Desks because they are the neatest and best constructed article on the market and give satisfaction everywhere.

A piece of Mission Furniture would look nice around the home. Our line of Rockers and Chairs is very extensive. Also our Dining Room Furniture is very large. PRICES GUARANTEED.

Your Credit is Good.
REED FURNITURE & CARPET CO.
18 to 40 East Third South Street